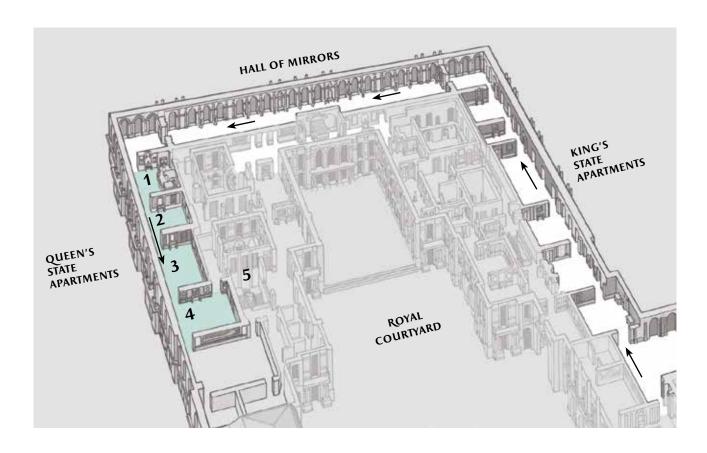






THE QUEEN'S STATE APARTMENTS

A SYMBOLIC PLACE IN THE PALACE AND COURT LIFE



- 1 QUEEN'S BEDCHAMBER
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→ DIRECTION OF THE PUBLIC TOUR

The sovereigns' State Apartments are where official duties were carried out and public life was conducted. They have been open to visitors since the Palace was established and are where all of the royal couple's official obligations were fulfilled, whether they related to etiquette (the first and grand getting-up and goingto-bed ceremonies observed by the public, etc.), State politics (ambassadors' receptions, etc.) or even religion. It is in these spaces, too, where all public audiences were conducted, courtiers were presented to the Court and certain festivities were held (balls, evening gatherings, etc.). The King and Queen each had such a ceremonial apartment, on the north and south sides of the royal residence, respectively. Courtiers made their way to see the Queen by taking the monumental Queen's Staircase, which was at the heart of daily life at the Palace, as it gave access to both the King's and Queen's apartments, from 1680 onwards.

The State Apartments of the King and Queen were designed at the same time, starting in 1672, and were initially laid out symmetrically. The Queen's State Apartments, although slightly truncated by the creation of the Hall of Mirrors in 1678, encompassed all the space

necessary for the performance of official duties: a Guard Room, two antechambers, a parade room and a large private chamber.

The ceiling décor featured the same gods and planets as those in the corresponding rooms on the north side; the only difference is in the moulded panels, which depict heroines here, rather than heroes. Unlike the King's Apartment, which Louis XIV abandoned in 1684 in favour of accommodation around the Marble Courtyard, leaving the adjoining spaces of the north side to host Court receptions, the Queen's official apartment remained unchanged. It was occupied by three queens and two dauphines, one after the other, between 1682 and 1789. Its décor and layout evolved more or less according to the women who resided there, which is why the rooms here are not as consistent as those in the King's Apartments.

Today, the Queen's State Apartments comprise four rooms, which are visited in the opposite order to that dictated by tradition. It is one of the most spectacular and popular areas of the Palace of Versailles, welcoming more than 8 million visitors a year..



The newly restored Queen's Bedchamber © Palace of Versailles, Thomas Garnier



The Queen's Royal Table Antechamber © Palace of Versailles, Thomas Garnier



Close-up of the newly restored Nobles' Room © Palace of Versailles, Thomas Garnier



The newly restored Queen's Guard Room © Palace of Versailles, Christian Milet





A MUCH-NEEDED OPERATION

NETWORKS RENOVATION, SAFETY AND SECURITY IMPROVEMENTS, AIR-CONDITIONING UPGRADE

WORKS UNDERTAKEN BETWEEN JANUARY 2016 AND FEBRUARY 2019.

This operation marked the start of phase 2 of the renovations, following the urgent works carried out during phase 1 of the development plan to renovate the Palace of Versailles authorised in 2003 by the French Ministry for Culture and Communication. This latest phase involved renovating all the technical networks, upgrading the security and safety of the State Apartments in the southern part of the central section of the Palace of Versailles, i.e. the Dauphin and Dauphine's Apartments, the Queen's State Apartments, the Queen's Private Apartments and chambers, Madame de Maintenon's Apartment, as well as the Coronation Chamber, the Pope's Chamber and the Chimay Attic within the Museum of the History of France. A partial air-conditioning system was also installed to enhance preservation of the décors and collections.

The works involved:

- making the spaces completely safe (expansion of fire detection, ensuring means of emergency evacuation, installing security lighting and signage, improving vertical and horizontal firebreaks, especially in attic spaces, smoke control in staircases, upgrading security PA systems, fire hydrants and dry-risers, etc.);
- rehabilitating the entire heating network and bringing it up to the required standards, in order to improve safety and energy consumption, and integrating air-conditioning controls for certain spaces (temperature and/or humidity, air conditioning);
- securing spaces (access control, anti-intrusion system, video surveillance, emergency-exit management, close-protection systems for the artworks);
- completely renovating high- and low-voltage networks;
- renovating and upgrading the lighting system (historical lighting, décor and artwork lighting);
- creating the necessary technical infrastructure (ducting and horizontal penetrations in the building/vertical shafts, underground plant rooms).

Initially, this project, which is managed on behalf of the Palace of Versailles by the OPPIC, did not encompass restoring the apartments' main décor. However, to make the most of the closure of the spaces to the public, the Public Establishment has conducted projects of varying scope in the Queen's Bedchamber, the Queen's Guard Room and the Queen's Nobles' Antechamber.



View of the plant room underneath the South Parterre. Heating and ventilation network @ Patrick Tournebœuf/Tendance Floue/Oppic



View of the spaces during the works, showing how walls and ceilings were protected. © Patrick Tournebœuf/Tendance Floue/Oppic

PROJECT MANAGEMENT AGENCY

Oppic, Opérateur du patrimoine et des projets immobiliers de la Culture.

PROJECT MANAGER

Frédéric Didier, architect-in-chief of historic monuments, in partnership with Khephren Ingéniérie, BET Structures. Alternet, BET Fluides.



On-site installation of temporary heating and ventilation equipment during the works.

© Patrick Tournebœuf/Tendance Floue/Oppic



View showing how the interior spaces were completely sealed off during the works. Tunnel on the site.

© Patrick Tournebœuf/Tendance Floue/Oppic

The OPPIC (Opérateur du patrimoine et des projets immobiliers de la Culture) has been working alongside the Public Establishment of the Palace, Museum and National Estate of Versailles since the launch of the development plan in 2003.

This is the biggest renovation project the former royal estate has seen since the reign of Louis-Philippe. The three main priorities are: restoring the historic monument and its décor, upgrading the security of the entire site to better protect visitors and buildings, and improving visitor reception by offering more extensive and defined tour options, and simplifying means of access.

The first phase of this development plan involved:
- installing temporary safety and security measures at the Palace;

- upgrading the security of the Royal Opera and

redistributing its services to make them more efficient;

- reorganising how individual visitors are received in the Dufour Pavilion and the Old Wing;
- refurbishing the Grand Commun (to accommodate Palace officials);
- creating a heating system for the Grand Commun;
- restructuring the Gabriel Pavilion to accommodate groups and setting up the central safety and security office;
- renovating the water tower in line with the new heating system.

The second phase of the development plan, launched in late 2010, is ongoing, with studies being conducted on renovating the heating networks, upgrading safety and security, installing air-conditioning in the northern half of the central section of the Palace, restoring the roofing on the Gabriel Pavilion and renovating the Water Pavilion.





REDISCOVER THE QUEEN'S STATE APARTMENTS

THE QUEEN'S BEDCHAMBER

On leaving the Hall of Mirrors and the adjoining Peace Room, which served in the 18th century as the Queen's main chamber, the first room visitors entered was the most important in the Queen's State Apartments: the bedchamber. Here is where the sovereign spent most of her time; it is where she slept and where, every morning, after dressing, she would receive her visitors.

This room, which was created for Maria-Theresa, wife of Louis XIV, who occupied it for just a short time (1682-1683), was occupied successively by the Dauphines Marie-Christine-Victoire of Bavaria (1684-1690) and Marie-Adélaïde of Savoie, Duchess of Burgundy (1697-1712), then by Queens Marie Leszczyńska (1725-1768), wife of Louis XV, and Marie-Antoinette (1770-1789), wife of Louis XVI. Nineteen "children of France", including the future Louis XV, were born in this bedchamber, in public, as was the tradition.

Nothing remains today of the décor created for Maria-Theresa, apart from a piece of the cornicing. The wall décor that visitors can see today was created for Marie Leszczyńska in 1730 and 1735, under the supervision of architects Robert de Cotte and Jacques V Gabriel, by the ornamental sculptors Jules Degoullons, André Le Goupil and Jacques Verberckt. The sculptures in the corners of the ceiling were restored in 1770 by Antoine Rousseau for Marie-Antoinette. They feature the arms of France and Navarre, alternated with the double-headed eagle of the Holy Roman Empire.

The room currently contains the "summer furnishings" that were in place at the time the royal family left Versailles for good, in 1789. The fabric is Gros de Tours brocade, featuring a white background and a design depicting a profusion of flowers, ribbons and peacock feathers, with a border of roses and lilac on a green background. This was commissioned from Desfarges of Lyon and produced between 1786 and 1787. It is what Queen Marie-Antoinette would have known, and was restored between 1946 and 1975 by the Lyon firms Prelle, Tassinari & Chatel, with help from Maison Brocard on the embroidery elements. All the chairs are covered with this silk.

It is through the door behind the wall-hanging on the left, at the back of the alcove, that Marie-Antoinette fled on the morning of 6 October 1789, to escape from the rioters who had invaded her apartment.

A DECOR RESTORED TO ITS FORMER GLORY

The astonishing Rococo décor created for Marie Leszczyńska has been brought back to life thanks to highly detailed and conscientious work, particularly on the miraculously preserved 18th-century gilding, whose wonderfully subtle matt and burnished effects can be appreciated once more, now that it has been cleaned. This technical project revealed a number of surprises to the restorers: the golden grisaille trompe-l'oeil décor, for example, which, as is often the case, lay hidden beneath a thick layer of paint. This has now been revealed in all its colours, shadow effects and the subtle grey-blue aspect, which gives effect to the illusion of its gilded reliefs, scrolls, lattices, the Queen's cypher and other motifs. Then there is the moulding in the compartments of the vault, which was believed to be a preserved section of Louis XIV's ceiling but turned out to be made from papier mâché, like the rest of the Rococo décor. So, the ceiling had been completely redone, meaning Robert de Cotte and Gabriel, by creating this décor in the Rococo style in fashion at the time, used - naturally enough - elements that were characteristic of the previous century, such as the heavy borders compartmentalising the ceiling and reminiscent of the Italian quadri riportati style (trompe-l'oeil framed scenes painted on the ceiling to look like canvases on an easel). This is, therefore, another example of the continuing influence of 17th-century norms on the décor of the Louis XV era, reflecting the harmony and majesty of the royal ceremony of these places.

As for the wood panelling, it was in a terrible state of disrepair. The gilding had to be restored and it had to be repainted to give it a white-grey tone, which is more historically accurate than the yellow tinge of the layers applied during the 20th century.

This hugely important work was completed within a tight timescale and represents an incredible achievement by the teams from Mériguet – Carrère and ARCOA, working under the guidance of the architect-in-chief.

RESTORATION OF THE GRISAILLES BY FRANÇOIS BOUCHER (1703-1770) IN THE QUEEN'S BEDCHAMBER

On 5 September 1725, Marie Leszczyńska married Louis XV at Fontainebleau. A few days later, she discovered the Queen's Apartment, with its décor dating from the time of the Sun King.

In 1735, she commissioned François Boucher to produce four allegories extolling the sovereign's virtues: *Charity, Piety, Generosity* and *Prudence*.

These circular canvases were mounted, i.e. stuck on to the arches of the ceiling of the Queen's bedchamber and accentuated by Rococo frames.

The team charged with their restoration identified lifting of the pictorial layer to varying degrees, depending on the exposure of the canvases. The papier-mâché frames, apart from the one surrounding

Prudence, had been pried off and then replaced, resulting in damage to the painting edges. Examination under UV light revealed repainting from four previous restoration attempts. The support needed to be reinforced and its physical integrity fully restored.

After the dust was removed, the flakes on the pictorial layer were reset into the canvas. Repainting over and under varnish, as well as oxidised varnishes that had caused the works to yellow, were removed. This resulted in a remarkably well-preserved original, meaning only limited infilling of gaps (reintegration) was required.

This work has restored all the voluptuous vivacity of François Boucher's art, and brought its grisaille colour palette into harmony with the surrounding décor.



François Boucher: Grisaille depicting the virtue of Charity

TECHNICAL PROJECT CHALLENGE: HOW TO PROTECT THE WALL-HANGINGS IN THE QUEEN'S STATE APARTMENT

Throughout the works, a real challenge for the restorers was how to protect the wall-hangings in the Queen's Bedchamber, Nobles' Room and the Royal Table Antechamber. Installing a double protective envelope of percale and Tyvek® using a method developed by the upholstery studio of Sébastien Ragueneau and Michel Chauveau proved to be the answer. It meant that, at the end of the project, the wall-hangings were recovered unchanged and uncontaminated by dust. A number of windows that had been set into the protective covering allowed the progress of the restoration, which was completed between January 2016 and March 2019, to be followed. The protection method had encompassed a preliminary and general micro-vacuuming of the curtains - at crossing points and around the bed the wall-hangings and the high-up fabrics in order to protect them from all traces of dust. While the textile restorers were at work, the fragile sections of the fabrics were monitored. Controlled microvacuuming was carried out at the end of the project, in March 2019, which testified to the effectiveness of the protection system.

Finally, similar micro-vacuuming procedures had also been carried out in January 2016 on the tapestries and termes of the Royal Table, the carpets in the Queen's Bedchamber and Nobles' Room, and on the furniture.



Protection of the wall-hangings in the Queen's bedchamber with observation window © Palace of Versailles / Didier Saulnier

BETTER PRESERVED AND PRESENTED FURNISHINGS IN THE QUEEN'S BEDCHAMBER

The projects to restore the furniture and artworks also had to address the issue of preventive conservation. The eight ployants (folding chairs) and two armchairs placed back in the Queen's bedchamber were covered in 2006 with dyed silk crepeline, which, had, unfortunately, visibly aged. The covers were pieced together and sewn at certain points on the furniture, but, over time, these points deteriorated. Similar protective covers were applied in 2011 to the quilt, bolster and chimney screen. All of these had to be upgraded, as they play an important role in keeping out dust and thus minimising the requirement for micro-vacuuming. In 2017, an operation began to restore the Comtesse de Provence's divan, followed by the two alcove armchairs and the eight ployants. This time, the type of protection is a tight-weave dyed silk crepeline, which is now sewn on to the piece where the trimmings are attached. Because they are firmly attached to the material, they cannot be removed and are far more discreet.

THE PART PLAYED BY THE PALACE OF VERSAILLES MUSEUM WORKSHOPS

In addition, the expertise of the Palace of Versailles museum workshops was called upon once again. The gilding workshop was asked to smarten up several items after they had been put back, such as the balustrade in the Queen's bedchamber and the borders around the overdoor panels. The cabinet-making and carpentry workshop produced the battens and fixings for the apartment's large canvases. It also took care of repositioning the balustrade and sprucing up the Riesener chests of drawers and corner cupboards in the Nobles' Room. The bronzes, meanwhile, were cleaned by an external conservator, who brought back a lustre to them that complemented the gilding of the chimney.



THE QUEEN'S NOBLES' ANTECHAMBER

View of the ceiling in the Queen's Nobles' antechamber © Palace of Versailles, Didier Saulnier



The second antechamber of the Queen's State Apartments served as the principal room for Queen Maria Theresa and then Queen Marie Leszczyńska. Queen Marie-Antoinette used it to hold formal audiences, so the room was named the Nobles' Antechamber. It is at that point that the wall

décor and furnishings were changed.

The only remaining part of the original 17th-century décor is the ceiling, painted between 1671 and 1681 by Michel II Corneille and dedicated to the glory of the arts and royal splendour. In the centre are *Mercury, the Arts and Sciences* (round painting), *Aspasia Speaking to the Philosophers, Lala of Cyzicus Painting, Penelope Weaving, Sappho Playing the Lyre, and, in the corners, Business, Diligence, Academia* and *Study*. In 1785, Richard Mique designed new white panelling, sculpted and gilded with two hues of gold, three overmantels and a Turquin blue marble fireplace with bronzes carved by Pierre Gouthière.

HARMONY RESTORED

Although work was done on the ceiling paintings in 2003, thanks to sponsorship by BNP Paribas, the rest of the room had not been touched since 1963, so the finishings were looking rather faded. The decision was therefore made to undertake, once the current project was completed, a full restoration of the wall décor up to and including the cornicing. This consisted of painting in the original pale grey shade discovered by surveys, as well as cleaning and reviving the two hues of beautiful gilding on the sculptures. This intricate work was carried out within the same tight timescale as the work on the Queen's Bedchamber by the teams from Mériguet-Carrère and ARCOA. They were able to restore to these spaces the majestic and elegant harmony envisaged by the Queen between the delicate colours of the fabrics, Riesener's mahogany furniture and the gilded bronzes complementing the gold panelling.

DECORATIVE SILK WALL HANGINGS

The Tassinari & Chatel company recreated the decorative silk wall-hangings, as ordered by the Palace of Versailles in 1956 and installed in the Nobles' Room in 1963. Historical records describe how the walls were hung for Marie-Antoinette with "green damask with a pattern of palms", the damask being edged with gold brocade. It comprises green silk framed by a double gold-brocade border, with gold thread woven on a background of green Gros de Tours fabric. The first border is a band of baguette (rectangular) shapes, while the second features "interlaced ovals". The fact that the complete dimensions were provided meant the artisans in 1956 were able to faithfully reproduce the double gold-brocade border.

However, because the design of the palm-patterned damask was not found, a damask cloth was chosen that was in keeping with the fabric décor of the room.

The effects of light and air quality combined to cause the damask and double border recreated between 1957 and 1963 to fade, with the gold thread of the brocade particularly affected by oxidation. The work on the Queen's State Apartments provided an opportunity to restore the room's decorative fabrics – requiring 150 linear metres of damask, 90 linear metres of the baguettes border and 85 linear metres of the interlaced-ovals border to be woven. This time, modern looms, rather than hand looms, were used, which was a real technological advancement for Tassinari & Chatel.



Putting the wall-hanging in place in the Queen's Nobles' antechamber © Palace of Versailles, Thomas Garnier

ARTWORK RESTORATION: THE "SULTANAS" CLOCK AND THE "OSTRICH" CANDELABRA



"Sultanas" clock
Gilded bronze case by François Rémond, gilder (1747-1812)
Urbain Jarossay, clockmaker
Patinated and gilded bronze, marble
Supplied for the Turkish room of the Comte d'Artois at Versailles in 1781

Palace of Versailles, Thomas Garnier

This extraordinary clock combines every possible reference to Turkish style. Its base rests on four dromadaries of patinated bronze. The clock face is flanked by two exceptional sultana figures of gilded bronze, who are supporting a turban that sits atop the four small figures of the second dial.

The condition of the work suggests it has not been altered much. The restoration entrusted to the Atelier Anthemios in Paris mainly involved disassembling it so it could be carefully cleaned to remove dirt and grime. An old cap on the Turquin blue marble had yellowed and so had to be remedied by applying watercolour of the same shade as the marble. There were patches of oxidation on the gilded bronze, so they also had to be treated by applying a fine protective coating of microcrystalline wax. Small flourishes, like the double scalloped trim of gilded bronze pearls and the silver

teardrop pendants hanging from the ledge of the Turquin, were finished off.

This item has regained all the radiance of an artistic masterpiece in gilded bronze.

The clock is flanked by a pair of "ostrich" candelabra in gilded bronze by François Rémond; they, too, were supplied for the Comte d'Artois' Turkish room at Versailles in 1782. Three linked ostriches support each candelabrum.

Once the candelabra had been disassembled and cleaned, the bronze mounts were examined. One of the two central threaded stems was subsequently straightened. Cleaning helped, in particular, to highlight the gilding on the "ostrich" base, which had darkened due to oxidation and rubbing. The blue varnish of the bases was fixed.

Now, the exceptional carving and the matt and shine of the top-notch gilding can be admired once more.



"Ostrich candelabrum"

François Rémond, gilder (1747-1812)
Supplied for the Turkish room of the Comte d'Artois at Versailles in 1781
© Palace of Versailles,
Thomas Garnier

THE QUEEN'S ROYAL TABLE ANTECHAMBER

Following construction of the Hall of Mirrors in 1680 and to compensate for the loss of several rooms from the Queen's Apartment on the terrace side, the Guard Room was transferred to the adjoining room, which, up until then, had been used as a chapel. The room thus became the Queen's first antechamber and was called the Royal Table Antechamber. Apart from being where the sovereigns dined in public, it was also a venue for plays and concerts throughout the Ancien Régime. Marie-Antoinette even had it altered to accommodate a platform for her musicians.

The Royal Table Antechamber is so named because of its function: this is where the King came to dine in public, with the family, in front of a sizeable audience. Essentially a political display, this was one of the most important events in the sovereign's day.

The décor in this room is themed around the planet Mars and, by the same token, the god of War. This is because this space was initially the Queen's guard room. The subjects recall the illustrious women of classical antiquity. The ceiling is adorned with a series of paintings on marouflage canvas and, like its counterpart in the King's State Apartments, features a large painted section in the centre, surrounded by arches decorated with paintings in shades of gold. The spandrels in the corners of the room, meanwhile, are decorated in relief with gilded stucco and feature military trophies. The paintings were produced between 1671 and 1680 by Antoine Paillet and Claude-François Vignon, with the decorative frames having been designed beforehand by Charles Le Brun, First Painter to Louis XIV. The stucco sculptures were fashioned by Pierre I Legros and Benoît Massou.

The central compartment originally depicted Mars, Capricorn and Scorpio (the signs of the zodiac associated with him), but, since the early 19th century, it has featured a wallpaper panel painted by Henri Testelin, after Charles Le Brun, displayed in the Mars Room: Darius' Family at Alexander's Feet. This work has been considered a masterpiece of French painting since it was first produced.

Today, it is seen as one of the most accomplished examples of the style developed by Charles Le Brun during the reign of Louis XIV.

FROM 2009 TO 2010 : AN EXTENSIVE RESTORATION PROJECT

These operations encompassed the paintings and gilded stucco on the ceiling, as well as the marble wall décor.

The two biggest challenges, in terms of **restoring** the paintings, were refixing the pictorial layer of the bas-reliefs painted by Claude-François Vignon and Antoine Paillet, and the overall work required on the central section of the ceiling. The preliminary study suggested the presence of a well-preserved original painting beneath the repaints and modified varnishes. The restoration work uncovered a Testelin work that was most beautifully preserved, in terms of the quality of the artistic treatment and vividness of the colours. In contrast, the work on the arches, as part of the overall operation, involved simply harmonising conditions dating almost entirely from the 20th century but whose quality nevertheless justified conservation. As a result, harmony, coherence and potency were restored to the décor.

In the case of the **gilded stucco**, however, the conservators worked to preserve, to the greatest extent possible, the old, original gilding and the regilding from the 19th century, whose texture, composition and degree of deterioration were very similar to that of the original gilding. But the various restoration efforts undertaken, particularly in the 20th century, had disturbed the harmony of the sculpted décor, mainly in terms of the gilding. As for the frames, they turned out to be in reasonable condition and thus did not require any particular reinforcement, apart from a few repairs to individual cracks.

The restoration also involved cleaning the polychrome marble in the window and door reveals, and on the wainscoting. Once cleaned of their grime, these select marbles recovered their contrasts and polish, and are now protected by a coating of microcrystalline wax and mastic filler here and there, on modified areas.

This restoration work was carried out in 2010 thanks to sponsorship by Martell & Co.



Ceiling of the Queen's Royal Table Antechamber, post-restoration © D.R.

RESTORING THE ARTWORKS: SAINT-CLOUD GALLERY WALL-HANGING



Le Parnasse Gobelins manufactory High-warp weaving workshop of Jean Lefebvre, after Pierre Mignard (1612-1695) Wool, silk and gold; woven: 1692-1701 © Palace of Versailles, Thomas Garnier

The tapestry depicts Apollo surrounded by muses gathered on Mount Parnassus. It is noted for the excellence of its weave and beauty of its colouring.

The Paris-Aubusson tapestry restoration workshop of the Mobilier National took charge of its restoration. It showed signs of general wear and tear, with the silk being particularly fragile. There were some breakages in the warp, but not to the detriment of the tapestry. There were bare warps in significant areas of the work. Repicking involved wrapping the warp with thread, thus creating a weave pattern that was then repicked in a fine cotton cloth. Several small repairs and patch-ups that had previously been made to the tapestry with sewing thread and a needle had to be unpicked and treated. After checking and sewing several open seams, the workshop then lined the tapestry with an aged linen cloth. The *Le Parnasse* tapestry, now back in the Queen's Apartments at Versailles, is part of a wallhanging that sits at the pinnacle of achievement by the Gobelins manufactory.

THE QUEEN'S GUARD ROOM

The Queen's Guard Room is the counterpart of the Diana Room in the King's State Apartments. It served as a landing on the Queen's staircase before becoming the new Queen's Guard Room in 1680. The racks for storing weapons were arranged around the room, as were screens, behind which were placed camp beds for the officers charged with keeping watch over the sovereign day and night.

The décor of the room dates entirely from the reign of Louis XIV. The central octagon and paintings in the arches, by Noël Coypel, were originally designed to adorn the ceiling of the old Jupiter Room, which became the War Room in 1678. Jupiter Accompanied by Justice and Mercy is in the centre, while the four paintings in the arches extol royal benevolence through examples from classical antiquity: Ptolemy Philadelphus Sets the Jews of Egypt Free, , Severus Alexander Distributes Wheat to the People of Rome, Trajan Metes out Justice and Solon Explains the Law to the Athenians. In the spandrels, the allegorical figures in shades of gold are accompanied by charming characters dressed in the fashion of the time. The two paintings facing each other on the walls are also by Noël Coypel. They portray Jupiter's Sacrifice, above the fireplace, and Jupiter's Childhood.

It was through this room on 6 October 1789 that the rioters broke into the apartment, killing one of the bodyguards who raised the alarm to save the Queen.

A LARGE-SCALE HERITAGE RESTORATION UNDERTAKEN BETWEEN 2015 AND 2018

The Queen's Guard Room was the only room in the Queen's State Apartments never to have undergone an essential restoration of its painted and architectural décor. Overall, the room was in a dilapidated and worn-out state, making restoration a necessity. The work subsequently undertaken restored the vitality of the magnificent polychrome marble panels, which are among the most significant sets of ceremonial décors from the Louis XIV period that can still be seen at Versailles. This project also restored the harmony and clarity of the painted décors. Work on the stucco, lead and gilded-wood décors completed the restoration. One of the biggest challenges overall was upgrading the room's six sculpted and gilded doors.



Central ceiling décor in the Queen's Guard Room, post-restoration © RMN-Grand Palais (Palace of Versailles) / Franck Raux



The Queen's Guard Room, post-restoration © Palace of Versailles, Didier Saulnier

Restoration of the painted and sculpted ceiling décors was possible thanks to the sponsorship of the American Friends of Versailles. Meanwhile, the Société des Amis de Versailles supported the restoration of the marble, woodwork, the two Noël Coypel paintings, Jupiter's Childhood and Jupiter's Sacrifice, and the gilded lead.





RESTORING THE PAINTINGS

The story of the ceiling in the Queen's Guard Room is certainly the Versailles tale with the most twists and turns. Originally, the central octagon and the canvases in the arches, commissioned from Noël Coypel (1628-1707), were destined for the ceiling in the Jupiter Room, which was destroyed during construction of the Hall of Mirrors. The paintings were therefore "repurposed" for the ceiling of this room. Designed in the studio, the canvases have been extended on all sides, which proves they were adapted from an original format. Put in place around 1679-1680, the whole was completed with the addition of four oil paintings on plaster in the spandrels. Various works were carried out on the room during the 18th and 19th centuries, but the most significant occurrence was the collapse of the central part of the ceiling in 1942 due to severe vibrations during the bombardments of the Second World War.

At the start of the essential restoration work, the state of conservation of the ceiling was concerning and chaotic. The canvases were warped and full of blisters, wrinkles, cracks, dents and flaking, while the plaster in the spandrels had cracks. Heavy repainting, wear and tear, myriad small cracks and oxidised varnishes disturbed the overall impression. The central, most damaged part was 80% repainted; whole sections of the composition, such as the faces, were completely redone and the flattened parts underwent successive treatments.

The cleaning process revealed more gaps and wear. A thin layer of covering liquid – yellow/orange in colour – was applied to the surface, which concealed much of the repaint embedded in the varnish layers. All of this substantially altered the colour palette of the work, even to the point of changing the original scheme. This work restored the brightness of the colours and really brought out the parts that were entirely produced by the hand of Noël Coypel.

The rehabilitation of the pictorial layer emphasised the remaining elements of the original canvases and made the composition as a whole more harmonious. The conservators' aim was to preserve a certain level of wear while, at the same time, recreating the missing contours so as prevent the blurred areas from spoiling the spirit of the painting.

Now, the decorative paintings are more harmonious visually, which is highlighted by the restored gilded stucco.

Incidentally, the two Noël Coypel paintings on the walls did not require any essential restoration, but they were, nevertheless, thoroughly cleaned and some distracting repaints were treated. As for the two canvas supports, some tensioning issues were dealt with.



Detail from the ceiling in the Queen's Guard room, before and after restoration © Palace of Versailles. Christian Milet



RESTORING THE ARCHITECTURAL DÉCOR

When the Oueen's Guard Room was built it was decorated with magnificent polychrome marbles: red Languedoc (Incarnat) and Rance, green Campan, antique black and white Carrara. Originally, the floor was paved with alternating slabs of black and white Carrara marble forming geometric shapes, but this was replaced at the end of Louis XIV's reign with Versailles-style parquet blocks. The room shares many similarities with its exact counterpart in the King's part of the Palace – the Diana Room – particularly in terms of the distribution and vertical arrangement of the marble panels. The black marble doorframes run right from the floor up to the cornicing, framing and emphasising the doors and overdoor panels, as well as the great mantelpieces on each side of the room. The main mantelpieces above the fireplaces on opposite sides of the room are each topped with paintings on canvas, bordered by frames of moulded marble and accentuated with garlands of gilded-lead flowers. The stucco decorations and overdoors were made by the sculptors Le Gros, Benoît and Massou, who had already worked on other rooms in the apartment.

Like the other rooms in the State Apartments, this room underwent a general overhaul between 1814 and 1815, prior to the installation of Louis XVIII at Versailles. Later, during the transformation of the Palace into a museum dedicated "to all the glories of France", only slight alterations were made to the room.

The restoration conducted from 2015 to 2019 focused on the room's architectural décor as a whole. The marble panels were in a bad way – dull, dirty, full of cracks and gaps – so they were dusted and cleaned. The joints were cleaned out and the gaps filled in.

The gilded stucco decorations on the ceiling (borders and cornicing) were completely restored, the royal cyphers and emblems, which were re-established after the Revolution at the request of Louis XVIII, were preserved in situ – at the frieze level of the cornicing – and now stand out in gold on a pale grey background, whereas, originally, the whole cornice was gilded. Particular care and attention were also devoted to the room's extremely high-quality works in gilded lead (overdoor trophies, large hanging garlands, etc.). The old gilding was consolidated, while the mismatched bronzing and gilding were removed and remedied.

The monumental red-marble fireplace from the Louis XIV era was completely restored. The hearth was redone, like the floor, in terracotta tiles. The cast-iron fireback, featuring the Royal Coat of Arms of France and Navarre, was cleaned and retinted.

Gilded-bronze locks paraphernalia, such as lockboxes, lock rods and bolts, were taken down for cleaning and, where necessary, gilding retouches.

The herringbone parquet in the Ancien Régime style that had remained in place until the transformation into a historical museum under Louis-Philippe was replaced with Versailles-style parquet blocks.

A considerable amount of work had to be done on the doors, which had been severely damaged through use. Their sculpted and gilded décor, fortified in 1814 with carton-pierre in the upper and lower sections, was cleaned and filled in, as there were several gaps. The gilding and painted pale-grey backgrounds were also redone; owing to their fragility, they will be protected under glass, like other decorative elements in the State Apartment. Finally, in line with the 1814 reference condition, the windows were repainted in yellow ochre rather than gilded.



View of the polychrome marble décor and sculpted doors

PROJECT MANAGEMENT Heritage and Gardens Directorate of the Palace of Versailles

THE QUEEN'S STAIRCASE

This monumental staircase of polychrome marble was built in 1680 as a counterpart to the legendary Ambassadors' Staircase, which disappeared in 1752. It quickly became one of the most visited parts of the Palace, as it led to both the King's and Queen's apartments.

It is decorated with a trompe-l'oeil painting displaying a *View of the Palace with figures in oriental attire* – a work by Philippe Meusnier and Jean-Baptiste Blain de Fontenay.

The recess on the first-floor landing contains a gilded-lead sculpture by Benoît Massou symbolising the marriage of Louis XIV and Maria Theresa of Austria. It depicts two lovers holding up a shield on which the intertwined cyphers of the King and Queen were once

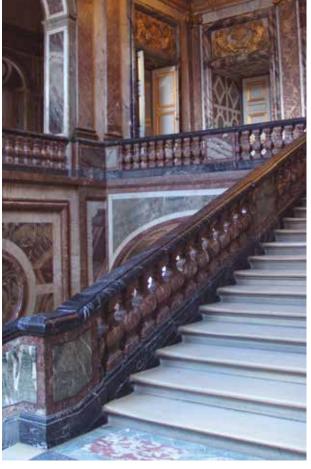
visible, and which is surmounted by two doves and the torches of Hymen.

At the top of the last flight of stairs, on the right, is the Queen's Guard room. To the left and along the loggia, is the King's Guard room.

It is by this route that, on 6 October 1789, at dawn, the assailants who had come to claim bread from the King tried to access the Queen's apartments, before a lady-inwaiting, alerted by one of the bodyguards, locked the door of the Royal Table Antechamber and implored the Queen to save herself.



View of the Palace with figures in oriental attire Philippe Meusnier and Jean-Baptiste Blain de Fontenay. 1676-1700 Oil on canvas Queen's Staircase, Palace of Versailles © D.R.



The Queen's Staircase © Palace of Versailles, Christian Milet





PLAN YOUR VISIT

GUIDED TOURS: THE WOMEN OF VERSAILLES: INTERLINKED PORTRAITS

Whether as royal spouses, members of the royal family or ladies of the court, the women of Versailles certainly made their presence felt. From Madame de Maintenon to Marie-Antoinette, each character left her mark – socially, culturally and politically.

Madame de Maintenon. In the Corridors of Power guided tour of the exhibition

At 10.30 am: 9, 11 & 29 May: 2, 7, 18 & 30 June; 3 & 11 July. **At 2.15 pm**: 22 & 26 May; 21 & 28 June; 7 July.

■ The Taste of Marie Leszczyńska guided tour of the exhibition

Marie Leszczyńska, wife of Louis XV, is remembered, above all, for her utter dignity and discretion. But it is through her taste, her passions and the activities that enchanted and excited her that the true personality of this sovereign is revealed. Painting, music and China are just some of the many subjects to explore in this exhibition held in the Dauphine's apartments.

At 10.30 am: 16 & 23 May; 14, 16, 25 & 28 June; 18 & 21 July; 2, 7 & 23 August; 4, 15, 20 & 28 September.

At 2.15 pm: 17 May; 10 July; 28 August; 12 September.

■ Louis XV's Daughters' Apartments

Two royal princesses, Madame Adélaïde and Madame Victoire, known affectionately as "Loque" and "Coche" by their father, lived in these apartments until the Revloution. These rooms, which are located below the King's State Apartments, are indicative of the lavish lifestyle of these ladies and their clear preference for "modern" art.

At 10.30 am: 16 & 26 April; 10 & 12 May; 15 & 22 June; 5, 19 & 28 July; 4 & 30 August; 10, 12, 21 & 27 September.

At 2.15 pm: 5 & 19 June; 16 August.

■ In the Realm of the King's Favourites

The royal favourites are also part of the history and legend of Versailles. Both Madame de Pompadour and Madame Du Barry occupied the luxurious accommodation right by King Louis XV's private apartments. By visiting them, the public can discover another facet of the King's everyday life.

At 10.30 am: 3 April, 3, 14 & 24 May; 23 June; 9 & 24 July; 17 & 28 August; 6, 11, 22 & 24 September.

At 2.15 pm: 13 & 25 April, 19 May; 13 & 30 June; 16 & 31 July; 4 August & 18 September.

Marie-Antoinette at the Petit Trianon

In 1774, Queen Marie-Antoinette was given the Petit Trianon by Louis XVI. The estate subsequently became her realm. Free from the bounds of etiquette, she created a world that reflected her personality and the fashion at the time..

At 1.30 pm: 4, 10, 18 & 23 April; 4 & 25 May; 7 & 25 Iune:

9 & 21 July; 7 & 22 August; 6 & 25 September. **At 3.15 pm:** 4, 10 April; 4 May; 7 & 25 June; 21 July; 7 August; 6 & 25 September.

■ The Queen's Hamlet

TRIANON ESTATE

At 1.30 pm: 3, 7, 27 & 30 April; 2, 21 & 29 May; 1, 15 & 26 June; 3, 7, 13, 18 & 27 July; 6, 10, 11, 14, 24 & 30 August;

7, 8, 21 & 22 September.

At 3.30 pm: 3, 7, 14, 18, 23, 27 & 30 April; 14, 21, 24, 25 & 29 May; 8, 11, 22 & 26 June; 3, 9, 18, 20 & 28 July; 3, 6, 14, 17, 22, 25 & 31 August; 14, 15, 24 & 29 September.

Prices: €10 + admission fee. Free for children aged under 10. **Duration:** 90 minutes

Booking essential on www.chateauversailles.fr, tel: + 33 (0)1 30 83 78 00 or in person on the day at the Ministers' North Wing (places are limited). Visits start directly in front of the entrance to the Grand Trianon.

Discover the complete programme on chateauversailles.fr

Visiting the Palace: audioguides are free and available in 11 languages, including French Sign Language. For tours of the State Apartments, a French-only audioguide is available especially for children from the age of 8 years. For the Marie Leszczyńska exhibition, audioguides are available in 11 languages: French, English, German, Spanish, Italian, Russian, Mandarin Chinese, Japanese, Portuguese, Korean and Polish.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Getting to the Palace from Paris

- RER C, going towards Versailles Château Rive Gauche
- Mainline trains (SNCF) from Montparnasse Station, going towards Versailles - Chantiers
- Mainline trains (SNCF) from Gare Saint-Lazare, going towards Versailles - Rive Droite
- RATP bus no. 171 from the Pont de Sèvres going towards Versailles Place d'Armes
- A13 motorway (towards Rouen), Versailles-Château exit
- Parking at Place d'Armes. There is a charge for parking, except for disabled drivers, and on special-event evenings from 7.30 pm.

Getting to the Estate of Trianon:

- From Paris: A13 motorway (towards Rouen); take the second exit, Versailles Notre - Dame.
- From the Palace: 25-minute walk through the gardens, or get the little train to the Petit Trianon and Grand Trianon stops.

The Palace is open every day except Mondays and

- from 9 am to 6.30 pm in high season, last admission at 6 pm (ticket offices close at 5.50 pm).

The Estate of Trianon is open every day except Mondays and 1 May:

- in high season, the Grand Trianon and the Petit Trianon are open from midday to 6.30 pm, last admission at 6 pm (ticket offices close at 5.50 pm).
- from midday to 7.30 pm for the gardens and the Queen's Hamlet (gardens are closed from 7 pm).
- from midday to 5.30 pm in low season, last admission at 5 pm (ticket offices close at 4.50 pm).

The Versailles park and gardens are open every day:

- in high season, the park is open from 7 am to 8.30 pm and the gardens, from 8 am to 8.30 pm, last access at 7 pm.
- from 8 am to 6 pm in low season.

High season: 1 April - 31 October Low season: 1 November - 31 March The Queen's State Apartment and exhibitions can be accessed by the following: holders of Passport or Estate of Trianon tickets, "A Year in Versailles" cardholders and those who qualify for free entry (under-18s, under-26s who are residents of the EU, disabled persons, French unemployed persons, etc.)

Palace ticket, also gives access to temporary exhibitions: €18, reduced price €13.

Estate of Trianon ticket: €12, reduced price €8.

1-day Passport gives access to the Palace, gardens, the Grand Trianon and Petit Trianon and Marie-Antoinette's estate, the Coach Gallery and temporary exhibitions: €20/€27 on days of the Musical Fountains Show and the Musical Gardens.

2-day Passport gives access over two consecutive days to the Palace, gardens, the Grand Trianon and Petit Trianon and Marie-Antoinette's estate, the Coach Gallery and temporary exhibitions: €25/€30 on days of the Musical Fountains Show and the Musical Gardens.

Free entry for those aged under 18 and residents of the EU aged under 26, except for the Musical Fountains Show and the Musical Gardens.

The park is free to access every day, all year round. The garden is free to access, except for the Musical Fountains Show and the Musical Gardens. The Musical Fountains Show and the Musical Gardens are free for children aged up to 5 years.

Free entry for unguided visits to the Palace, Marie-Antoinette's estate and temporary exhibitions, but not including the Musical Fountains Show, for:

- disabled people and one companion, on presentation of proof of disability
- recipients of minimum social benefits upon presentation of proof dated no more than 6 months previously
- for jobseekers in France

/ERSAILLES FOR ALL

- for teachers working in French educational institutions and holding a Pass Éducation.

Information and booking: + 33 (0)1 30 83 75 05 and versaillespourtous@chateauversailles.fr





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